

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Why is there no preferred alternative identified in the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIS)?

A1. The document is still a draft. The Army Corps of Engineers wants to leave a number of options open for discussion and debate, rather than focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of a single preferred alternative. Thus, the RDEIS presents an array of alternatives, ranging from the Current Water Control Plan to four that include features of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reasonable and prudent alternative described in its 2000 Biological Opinion. The Corps believes that by presenting an array and not just a preferred alternative, people and interest groups can use the impacts analyses to better understand and compare the impacts of various alternatives and provide valuable input to officials who must make the final decision.

Q2. When will there be a preferred alternative for people to react to?

A2. The Corps intends to publish a single preferred alternative in the Final Environment Impact Statement in May 2002.

Q3. How can people get copies of the RDEIS? Is there a cost?

A3. The Corps will continue to make the review and update of the Missouri River Master Water Control Manual a very open process. All the documents connected with the RDEIS are available at: www.nwd.usace.army.mil/. Included are the summary, the RDEIS, news releases, frequently asked questions, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion, schedule of workshops and hearings, locations of repositories for the RDEIS and other materials and sources of additional information. In addition, all these materials are available in print and on compact disk by writing to: Project Manager, Master Manual Review and Update, 12565 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68144. Please identify which medium is preferred. There is no charge.

Q4. How can people make comments on the RDEIS and the various alternatives?

A4. A public comment period will run from Aug. 31, 2001 through Feb. 28, 2002. An extensive series of workshops and hearing will be conducted in October and November 2001 from Helena, Montana, to New Orleans, Louisiana. A complete schedule is available at: www.nwd.usace.army.mil or by writing to Project Manager, Master Manual Review and Update, 12565 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68144. In addition, written comments can be made by using the website or by writing to the address above.

Q5. In complying with the Endangered Species Act, can the Corps ignore other legally authorized purposes such as navigation?

A5. The Corps' intent is to consider alternatives that meet the requirements of the ESA as well as all other authorized project purposes.

Q6. When will the Final Environmental Impact Statement be published? Will people be able to comment on the selected alternative?

A6. The Corps intends to publish a Final Environmental Impact Statement containing a single preferred alternative plan for managing the large dams on the Missouri River in May 2002. Comments on a final EIS are accepted for 30 days following its release.

Q7. Who will sign the Record of Decision? When will that happen?

A7. The current schedule calls for the Northwestern Division Engineer to sign the Record of Decision and publish it in the Federal Register in October 2002.

Q8. When will the Corps implement any changes to the Master Manual? Is 2003 still a valid date?

A8. The schedule for implementation of an updated manual is unchanged. Following publication of the Final EIS and Record of Decision, the Corps will complete the revisions to the Master Water Control Manual. An Annual Operating Plan for 2002 – 2003 will be prepared for public review in the fall of 2002. This plan is slated for implementation on March 1, 2003, which is the beginning of the water year.

Q9. Regarding the common four alternatives with a range of modified releases from Gavins Point Dam, what exactly is meant by a “spring rise”?

A9. A spring rise from Gavins Point Dam of 15,000 to 20,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) above full navigation targets for 2 weeks on average every three years to trigger pallid sturgeon spawning. If implemented, the rise would begin at the 15,000 cfs level followed by monitoring and evaluation of the biological response. The rise would not be provided in years with high downstream tributary flows like 2001.

Q10. Regarding the common four alternatives with a range of modified releases from Gavins Point Dam, what is meant by low annual releases?

A10. Low annual releases from Gavins Point from mid-June to mid-August would provide nesting habitat for least terns and piping plovers. These releases would range from minimum navigation service to 21,000 cfs from the dam. If implemented, they would begin at the minimum service level followed by monitoring and evaluation of the biological response.

